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ABSTRACT

Research concerning the changing roles of the school principal is summarized in this paper, with a focus on the historical conflict between the instructional leadership and administrative roles. Efforts in educational reform are reviewed, which have brought about school restructuring, role conflict, and changes in communication. A review of reform efforts in school leadership identifies four domains of the principalship--functional, programmatic, interpersonal, and contextual. A conclusion is that calls for school reform have greatly affected principal roles. Principals will act as facilitators for shared governance, participant empowerment, school-based decision making, and expanded student potential. Because the obstacles to effective principalship are indicative of larger, fundamental problems, interrelationships in school operation must be considered. (32 references; 23 bibliographic sources) (LMI)

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THE CHANGING ROLES OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: A RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

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THE CHANGING ROLES OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: A RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

ABSTRACT

The historical conflict between the instructional leadership role and the administrative management aspects of the principalship has had a major impact on the profession. Historically the principal was viewed as a teacher with limited knowledge of administration. However, over time and through tradition, the principalship evolved into a management position, so much so that today's principal's are often perceived as an administrative manager with limited awareness of teaching technology.

One of the major ironies of modern education is the evolution of the principal's role (Johnson & Johnson, 1984). At one time the principal was a teacher with little or no knowledge of administration. In today's educational framework the exact opposite is true--a principal being an administrator with limited knowledge of the technology of teaching. Yet many current researchers and principals expect the principal to be the instructional leader in

the school. Much of this expectation and promise relates directly to recent developments in effective schools research.

INTRODUCTION

During the 1980s researchers turned their attention the broad sociological processes at work in contemporary American schools. They uncovered the silhouette of an expansive new theory of school effectiveness, a concept which theorized that the success of a school was substantially determined by the underlying structure of expectations and norms in the school. This sociological system exerted a powerful influence on the behavior of faculty and students and ultimately determined a school's success.

Much has been written in the last decade concerning the effective schools movement and the principal's role in an effective school. However, researchers have a difficult time accurately assessing an effective school and even more difficulty in defining educational leadership in effective schools.

Norm

The deeper processes inculcated in effective schools involve self -reinforcing norm-behavior cycles that operate in social groups. Organizations or groups develop norms of behavior which dictate how members of the organization are expected to behave. By interacting with others in the organization, individuals learn what is considered appropriate

behavior and what is not appropriate. When the individual acts in accordance with the norms, they are confirmed and reinforced. In this cyclical manner norms are reinforced and perpetuate themselves. In effective schools improving student achievement is the norm, and the resulting behaviors are conducive to the attainment of that norm.

Constraints on the principalship

Schools have historically been a reflection of public priorities. As the public desired or needed broader programs, the schools were asked to shape the curriculum toward accomplishing those objectives. Historically, public sentiments outlined very broad objectives for schools. Goal ambiguity has been a major problem encountered by school principals as they confronted the complex milieu of public needs. Logically, schools and their principals could be more effective if the goals of both the public and the school district were clearer. However, when goals are not clear, the constraints placed upon the principal lead to some very real conflicts for both the principal and the school.

Often temporary and divergent demands have been placed upon principals by a mobile, pluralistic society. Consequently, principals are forced to divert attention from long-range, substantive matters, to the immediate issues of the public. The burden of attempting to respond to such a broad spectrum of divergent demands proves exhausting to even the most

dedicated and in-sightful principal. Principals have not always been consulted on the formulation of policies that affect school programs and operations. Obviously, the principal is the person most responsible for carrying out policies in the school. Principals are public symbols for the schools and as such, the qualities also have a significant impact on the character of the school. How a principal balances the contradictory, if not conflicting, professional and bureaucratic requirements of the organization has tremendous impact on the entire school.

REFORM AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP

Since the early 1980s there has been a growing emphasis on restructuring American public education (Cuban, 1990; Chubb and Moe, 1990; Frymier, 1987; Maeroff, 1988). The focus of restructuring has stemmed from the recognition that the world is rapidly evolving both as a technological and global society (Hodgkinson, 1985). These societal changes impact how schools are to prepare students to be productive citizens in the 21st Century (Toeffler, 1980).

Technological Advances

The world's knowledge base has doubled twice in this century and continues to increase geometrically (Cornish, 1986). Business and industry leaders forecast that current data processing and information systems will be

replaced by "sophisticated devices for knowledge creation, capture, transfer, and use" (Dede, 1989, p. 23). Technology will restructure the tasks of the worker in the workplace requiring greater use of higher-order thinking skills (Dede, 1989).

Global Interdependence and Cultural Diversity

Futurists predict that global and multi-cultural pressures will alter the workplace creating an economy that is globally interdependent (Benjamin, 1989). This dictates the need for greater understanding and knowledge of world cultures and ability to cope with diversity of context.

Changes in the Workplace

Teams increasingly will become the way people work in all types of organizations. Studies of effective business suggest that the collective knowledge skills, and creative energy of groups of individuals enhances the quality and quantity of output in organizations (Lawler, 1986).

Impact on Education

The changing society dictates that students will need skills and competencies in critical thinking, reasoning, and creative problem solving (Dede, 1989). The team structure in the workplace demands workers who can function in a cooperative setting, focusing on group task performance and collaborative learning (Dede, 1989). There also is the realization that schools must function in environments that support critical thinking, collaboration,

cooperative learning, and participant involvement in critical decision making (Jenkins, 1988; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Greer & Short, 1990). Many recognize that schools must restructure significantly in order to address student learning (David, Cohen, Honetschlager, & Traiman, 1990).

REFORM EFFORTS IN EDUCATION

Inherent in the restructuring theme are implications for school structure and school leadership. Many suggest that if schools are to address successfully the needs of students for the 21st Century, then changes must occur not only in instruction but in the way schools are structured for decision making, collaboration among participants, and accountability (David 35 al., 1990). Commissions have recommended that schools be restructured to become flexible, autonomous units capable of solving problems at the school-base level (Thomson, 1990). It appears that the changing environment requires schools that maximize all human potential within the organization to better prepare students to live in the evolving society (Thomson, 1990).

Changes in the School Structure

Success in business and industry with the team approach for greater participant involvement in decision making has impacted the restructuring of schools (Greer & Short, 1990). The creation of self-managing teams in business has been successful in empowering participants and improving the

quality of the work of those companies (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Lawler, 1986; Manz & Sims, 1987). Studies in participatory decision making in business and industry have revealed that worker involvement in key decisions increases productivity, sense of ownership, and commitment (Lawler, 1986). Traditionally, school-based participants have been excluded from key decisions that greatly affect their work design (Little, 1982; Zielinski, 1983). While administrators may seek information and advice in making decisions for the school, final decisions typically are made by administration. Teachers are believed to be unable or unwilling to accept the responsibility of decision making (English & Hill, 1990). However, the current restructuring movement recognizes the need to empower school participants as authority, and decision making is moved from the central office to school-based teams (David et al., 1990; Principals for 21st Century Schools, 1990). The major thrust in efforts to change the school structure includes (1) shared governance among school participants, (2) greater teacher opportunities for collaboration with control over their work environment and work condition, and (3) restructuring roles and responsibilities to create a sense of shared leadership in the school (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Cuban, 1990; Maeroff, 1988). Jenkins (1988) states that "to empower others is to give a stakeholder share in the movement and direction of the enterprise" (p. 149). Lightfoot (1986) defines

empowerment as the opportunities that an individual has for responsibility, choice, autonomy, and authority.

Role Conflict

Many accounts exist in the research literature concerning the role of the principal. Views of the principal as instructional leader, administrator, community leader, disciplinarian, and organizational change agent dominate the literature. Probably most principals incorporate elements of each view into their personal frame of action. However, the most prevalent belief articulated by the literature is of "principal-as-instructional leader" (Greenfield, 1982).

The historical conflict between the instructional leadership role and managerial aspects of the principalship has had a major impact on the entire professional. Initially, a careful distinction between leadership and management must be made. House and Mitchell (1974) defined management as: "a process . . . whereby subordinates are brought to execute prescribed formal duties and to accomplish certain given objectives". By contrast, leadership was defined earlier by House (1971) as "a process whereby one person exerts social influence over the members of a group." Bennis summarized his views by stating that a manager was a person "who did things right" and a leader was a person "who did the right things" (Bennis, 1986). Mattson (1983) concluded that "the primary function of the principal is to

articulate in a clear and potent manner the discrepancy between the existing status of schools and the preferred status of schools."

Communication

Other changes revolve around communication. Communication in the traditional school reflects one-way, top down movement of information. Restructured schools support two-way, cross-team discussions on all issues of concern to school participants (English & Hill, 1990). Problems and issues may be identified by anyone in the school with decisions made with much collaboration and involvement of all school participants (English & Hill, 1990; Short, Greer, & Michael, 1991). Many types of team structures build links among faculty, principal, and students (English & Hill, 1990; Principals for 21st Century Schools, 1990; Short et al., 1991). Site-based budgeting can involve all or teams of school-level participants in staffing and programmatic decisions (English & Hill, 1990).

Accountability in restructured schools moves from school effectiveness indicators (drop-out rates, attendance, standardized test scores) to include learner effectiveness indicators (English & Hill, 1990). These include assessment of mastery skills with criterion-referenced tests, portfolios of student products indicating empowerment, creativity, and self-directed learning (Greer & Short, 1990).

REFORM EFFORTS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Changes in School Leadership

Primary in the restructuring movement is school-based management and decision making (Principals for 21st Century Schools, 1990). In addition, restructured schools will be more collaborative with greater participant involvement in all aspects of school restructuring (Thomson, 1990; Principals for 21st Century Schools, 1990; Short et al., 1991). The restructured school will impact the role of the principal and dictate knowledge and skills that must be acquired to successfully provide leadership in changing schools (English & Hill, 1990; Thomson, 1990: Principals for 21st Century Schools, 1990).
To provide leadership required in the restructured school, individuals in the principalship must be change agents with skills in creating collaborative action (Thomson, 1990). The development and utilization of all human resources within the organization will be the unique challenge of school leaders. The successful school leader will embrace innovation and risk taking as necessary for renewal and for meeting the ever-evolving needs of diverse students in the changing environment (Principals for 21st Century Schools, 1990).

Two national associations for school principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, have issued documents outlining specific skills and knowledge that principals in restructured schools will require (Thomson,

1990; Principals for 21st Century Schools, 1990). These skills closely relate to the changing context of schools.

While more general, the recommendations of the National Association of Elementary School Principals are based on a set of assumptions about the characteristics of restructured schools. Those assumptions are as follows: (1) principals will be leading teachers who themselves will be exercising leadership in an environment of shared governance; (2) schools will increase their efforts to effectively prepare students for a global society and economy; (3) the elementary and middle school principalship will become more specialized; (4) principals will continue to exercise instructional leadership skills in order to provide the kinds of instructional experiences required by students; (5) school-based decision making and management will grow; (6) the building of collaborative environment with participant involvement will require high levels of interpersonal skills for principals; (7) the development of the human resources in the organization will require principals to utilize adult learning theories; and (8) sweeping technological advances will impact the role of the principal, requiring continual professional development for principals (Principals for 21st Century Schools, 1990).

With the above assumptions undergirding the restructuring of the role of school principals, the National Association of Elementary Schools Principals has established a set of skills and competencies that characterize the

new leader. These are as follows: (1) knowledge of effective instructional practices, (2) effective leadership skills, (3) skills in motivating and leading teacher leaders, (4) knowledge of curriculum development, (5) knowledge of child development including children under 5 years of age, (6) effective communication skills for complex communication patterns, (7) effective interpersonal skills, (8) planning and implementation skills, (9) knowledge and understanding about the rapidly changing society, (10) knowledge of effective school practices, (11) knowledge of technological applications to management and instruction, (12) skills in effectively using the political process to achieve school goals, (13) skills in site-based management, (14) ability to build partnerships with parents and the school, (15) skills in gathering appropriate data for decision making, and (16) skills in developing a rich school climate and culture that is conducive to empowerment (Principals for 21st Century Schools, 1990).

Similarly, the National Commission for the Principal, sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, indicates that the major role of principals in restructured schools fall into four categories of domains (Thomson, 1990). Based on many of the assumptions espoused by the elementary principals' group, the domains focus on two dimensions. One dimension relates to the exercise of broad leadership in developing the culture

that supports collaboration, teams participant involvement in decision making, innovation, and risk taking. The other dimension focuses on the functional aspects of leadership. In other words, those principal activities that ensure that the tasks of the organization are accomplished (Thomson, 1990).

Specifically, the four categories of domains identified by the National Commission for the Principalship include (1) functional domains including leadership, problem analysis, judgement, delegation, implementation, information collection, and organizational oversight; (2) programmatic domains including curriculum design, student development, staff development, assessment, resource allocation, and instruction; (3) interpersonal domains including motivation, sensitivity, oral communication, and written communication; (4) contextual domains including philosophical and cultural values, legal issues, policy and political influences, and public and media relations (Thomson, 1990).

Restructuring through the principalship

It is evident from the work of these national organizations and other groups (Thomson, 1990; Principals for 21st Century Schools, 1990; Short et al., 1991) that the restructuring of public education has focused the role of the school leader squarely on facilitating the development of school organizations that engage participants in collaborative efforts and shared governance. In addition, restructuring calls for school leaders to function as change agents,

having the skills to create a synergy towards organizational renewal and innovation. Finally, leaders in restructured schools must demonstrate skills in utilizing forces outside the school to help the school achieve its vision for quality instruction for students. If the role of the school leader is changing, how are preparation programs impacted by the reform efforts in education?

Changes in Principal Preparation Programs

The call for reform of principal preparation programs can be seen as early as 1982 in Pitner's (1982) recommendations that educational leaders re-examine the training needs of university administrative preparation programs in terms of content, scope, delivery, and practice. Pitner (1982) recognized that traditional preparation programs must restructure to provide greater reality-oriented preparation with improved clinical experience. Educational leaders began to recognize that to build the kinds of skills needed by principals in restructured schools, university programs needed to emphasize theoretical and clinical knowledge with greater collaboration with practitioners (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1985, 1990; Improving the Preparation of School Administrators: An Agenda for Reform, 1989).

Systematic efforts to reform principal preparation programs began in 1987 with the publication of Leaders for America's Schools, the report of the National Commission for Excellence in Educational Administration (1987). The commission was formed through the efforts of the University Council for

Educational Administration supported by foundations and a number of professional educational organizations. The report made several significant recommendations relative to preparation programs for school leaders. Specifically, the report recommended the following: administrator preparation programs be designed after the professional school model; programs for the recruitment and placement of ethnic minorities and women should be initiated by universities; public schools should become full partners in the preparation of school administrators; and professional development activities should be an integral component of the careers of professors and practitioners (Leaders for America's Schools, 1987).

In addition, the commission recommended that education leadership be redefined, that the National Policy Board for Educational Administration be established, that preparation programs that are very small in size be eliminated, and that licensure programs be reformed (Leaders for America's Schools, 1987).

The report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration has forced professional preparation programs to address (1) clinical experiences of students, (2) the development of cohorts of students for the duration of coursework, (3) the role of practitioners in the preparation of school administrators, (4) the development of problem-solving, reflective skills of administrators, (5) the development of administrators who can

facilitate the evolution of a professional organizational structure, (6) the development of collaborative models between the university and the public schools for school improvement purposes and research, and (7) the role of universities in the continual professional development of practicing administrators.

CONCLUSIONS

The call for reform of public education by the restructuring of schools and school leadership has greatly impacted the role school principals will assume in these restructured schools. Principals will assume the role of facilitator, providing leadership in the development of a school climate supportive of shared governance, greater participant empowerment, and school-based decision making. In addition, school principals must be able to more effectively focus human resources on the development of student potential, empowering students to become self-directed, life-long learners (Short et al., 1991).

The effectiveness of principals is not considered as bipolar. No principal is considered completely effective or totally ineffective. Principals evidence degrees of effectiveness. Many of the obstacles encountered by principals are symptoms of larger, more fundamental problems. For example, the apparently unending "routine management tasks" that principals

encounter which divert their attention from instructional leadership, indicate a much larger problem, the inability of educational leaders to control their own destiny (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1984).

The distinction between instructional leadership and management could also be artificial. Effective principals must wear two hats: as both instructional leaders and efficient managers. While researchers dissect the principalship for greater understanding of its complexity; ultimately, the parts must be reassembled to reflect the immense interrelationships inherent in the operation of quality schools.

THIS PAPER IS BASED ON A FORTHCOMING BOOK: RICHARDSON, M. D., SHORT, P. M., & PRICKETT, R. L.(1992). SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND CHANGE. NEW YORK: GARLAND PRESS.

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The National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals have created the National Commission for the Principal and published recommendations for performance domains for school principals. The performance domains fall into four categories including (1) functional domains, (2) programmatic domains, (3) interpersonal domains, and (4) contextual domains. A taxonomy of standard for the school principalship are contained in the appendix.

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FOUR PRINCIPALSHIP DOMAINS

1) FUNCTIONAL

2) PROGRAMMATIC

3) INTERPERSONAL

4) CONTEXTUAL

FUNCTIONAL DOMAIN

1) LEADERSHIP

2) PROBLEM ANALYSIS

3) JUDGEMENT

4) DELEGATION

5) IMPLEMENTATION

6) INFORMATION COLLECTION

7) ORGANIZATIONAL OVERSIGHT

PROGRAMMATIC DOMAIN

1) CURRICULUM DESIGN

2) STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

3) STAFF DEVELOPMENT

4) ASSESSMENT

5) RESOURCE ALLOCATION

6) INSTRUCTION

INTERPERSONAL DOMAIN

1) MOTIVATION

2) SENSITIVITY

3) ORAL COMMUNICATION

4) WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

CONTEXTUAL DOMAIN

1) PHILOSOPHICAL AND CULTURAL VALUES

2) LEGAL ISSUES

3) POLICY AND POLITICAL INFLUENCES

4) PUBLIC AND MEDIA RELATIONS